



Thursday Morning, September 24, 1970

Page 16A

The Creeper's Credibility

In a refreshing reversal of national trends, state officials recently gave Heber City area factions a sympathetic hearing on their efforts to preserve a short passenger train line. At least Gov. Rampton and State Highway Department authorities agreed that those championing the "Heber Creeper" should have the opportunity to develop a full proposal.

The group got active when the highway department proceeded with plans to tear up old tracks between Olmstead and Heber City for a road improvement project in Provo Canyon. Long unused, the former Denver and Rio Grande Western line's right right-of-way was acquired by the state about two years ago. Its protec-

tors now argue they can restore passenger travel on the route between Wildwood and Heber City.

The idea is to make the run a commercially successful tourist attraction. During a recent hearing at the Capitol, Gov. Rampton asked the highway department to stay rail removal until the restoration promoters could complete a feasibility study.

From most angles the Heber Creeper is appealing. Provo Canyon scenery is matchless. Passenger trains are disappearing, those maintained in particularly quaint surroundings could be increasingly popular as time goes on. The Utah Fish and Game Division's major fish hatchery is on the rail route between Heber City and Wildwood, Bridal Veil Falls is at the Wildwood terminal. Put this all together and you have an exciting tourist possibility.

However, reviving and operating even a short railroad line for passengers is no minor undertaking. Will enough people want to ride a train through an area most of which can be traversed by car? And because the stretch involved does include what are considered from sports fishery and scenic standpoints the river canyon's key three miles — narrow through steep rocky walls — is there really room for a widened highway, an operating railroad, an unharmed river and all the original natural beauty?

Such are the questions Heber Creeper advocates, highway officials and others will have to answer. There is enough time to search for a workable solution. Apparently, those with a deep interest are being encouraged to find it.

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Heber Creeper to Run After State Pardon

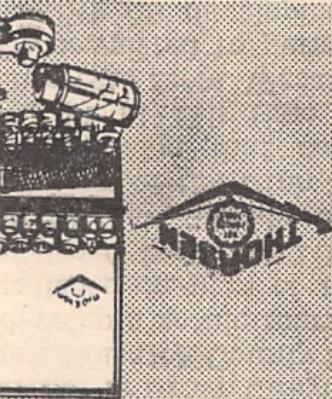
After many early and late meetings with many people, the "Save the Heber Creeper" committee met with the Utah State Road Commission in Salt Lake City on Tuesday, September 22, at 1:00 p. m. to ask them once more to delay the removal of the railroad from Wildwood to Heber in Provo Canyon and permit Wasatch County interests to develop a scenic tourist oriented railroad on part of the present railroad bed. At 1:15 p. m., a motion was made by Wayne Winters of the Utah State Road Commission that contract not be let at this time and that interests from Wasatch County be permitted to pursue the possibility of developing a railroad directed at stopping more tourists in the State of Utah. This motion was seconded by Francis Felch of Vernal, and also a member of the Utah State Road Commission.

Spokesman for the Wasatch

County group was Lowe Ashton Jr. Mr. Ashton, along with several other men in the state have spent long hours of time getting necessary information together to use as a sales tool to present the idea of the retention of the railroad bed and tracks. Many, many hours and several dollars in long distance telephone calls to similar railroads in other parts of the United States and letters to similar railroads have gone into the preparation of this program.

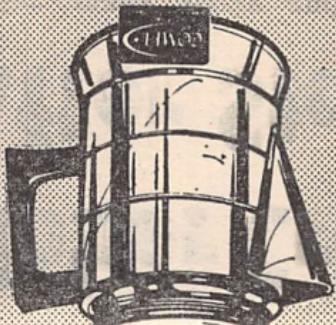
The Wasatch Railway Museum and Foundation, Inc., will have until April 11, 1971 to move their steam locomotives, cars and other equipment into Heber Valley over the present railroad. The State Road Commission will authorize removal of the track from Wildwood to the mouth of Provo Canyon after April 1st so the construction in the lower canyon can begin on schedule.

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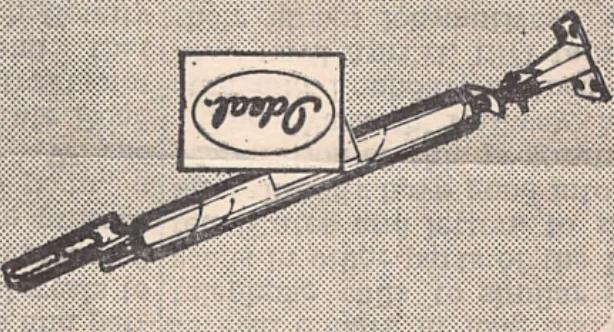
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